

VZCZCXRO9520
RR RUEHGI
DE RUEHNJ #0704/01 1381226
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 181226Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3756
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1135
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 0361
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0765
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0622
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1177
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1057
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0219
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0852
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1386
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 2669
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0562
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1777
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 1174
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0761

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000704

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND AF/PD, LONDON
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CHAD'S GRAND IMAM WELCOMES
OUTREACH EFFORTS

¶1. (U) Summary. The Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Chad's Grand Imam, Sheikh Hassan Hissein Abakar, the spiritual leader of Chadian Muslims. The Grand Imam was seriously injured last week in a dispute outside his office, and the visit provided an opportunity to wish him a speedy recovery. During the exceptionally warm meeting, the Ambassador discussed the Mission's Muslim outreach projects and solicited the views of the Imam on the current political situation in Chad. The Imam spoke in favor of a national round table now that the May 3 presidential elections are finished. End Summary.

Imam Injured

¶2. (U) Sheikh Hassan Hissein Abakar, Grand Imam of Chad and president of the High Islamic Council (HIC), received the Ambassador at the Imam's private residence on May 16, 2006. Also present were the first and second vice-Imams, numerous members of the HIC, the head of radio Al-Quran Al-Karim (broadcast from the Grande Mosque), and a number of Arabic-language journalists. The Imam was stabbed in both arms last week while trying to stop a marital dispute that turned violent on the grounds of the Grande Mosque. The injury on his right arm required surgery to repair severed ligaments, and he appeared rather frail but in good spirits. Thus, the first order of business was to inquire about his health, and the Ambassador wished him a speedy and full recovery.

Muslim Outreach

¶3. (U) The Ambassador took the opportunity to briefly discuss with the Grand Imam some of the Embassy's recent Muslim outreach activities, including: the Shared Futures education project; the Arabic-language journalist training in Rabat, Morocco; and the human rights seminar for Imams and Marabouts. The Ambassador also spoke with the

Grand Imam about his recent trip to Abeche and the Ouaddai region, which included a visit to refugee camps, and courtesy calls on the Grand Imam of Abeche, and the Sultan of Ouaddai two other very prominent Muslim leaders in Chad, and close contacts of the Embassy. The Grand Imam expressed his pleasure at these visits, stating that he views the U.S. "as a partner" in many different areas.

Elections

¶4. (U) Finally, the Ambassador and the Grand Imam spoke briefly about the May 3 elections, and the current political situation in Chad. The Grand Imam outlined the opinion of the HIC, which supports a round table being held now that elections are finished. The Grand Imam stated that the HIC did not feel it would have been wise to hold a round table before elections, nor to postpone the elections. Both of these options, the Grand Imam said, would have certainly led to civil war. The Grand Imam expressed his hopes that the United States will continue to work with all parties in Chad towards peace, and the Ambassador reaffirmed our strong commitment to assist in finding a solution to Chad's current political crisis.

Comment

¶5. (U) The warmth of this meeting was palpable, and it is clear that the Grand Imam considers the Ambassador to be

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a friend, comfortable receiving him in his home. This is the second time the Ambassador has visited the Imam in times of trouble, the first being in February on the death of the late Grand Imam of Abeche. The Grand Imam commented very positively on this, essentially saying that the Ambassador is much more than a fair-weather friend. This warm relationship provides a very strong base for the Mission's Muslim outreach projects in Chad. The visit received very positive coverage on Radio Al-Quran Al-Karim.

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